

REMARKS

The above preliminary amendment is made to include amendments to the international application PCT/IL97/00161, published in the International Preliminary Examination Report for that application and to remove multiple dependencies from claims 7, 9-10, 14 and 39.

A new abstract page is supplied to conform to that appearing on the publication page of the WIPO application, but the new Abstract is typed on a separate page as required by U.S. practice.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "Marked-up Copy".

Applicants respectfully request that the preliminary amendment described herein be entered into the record prior to calculation of the filing fee and prior to examination and consideration of the above-identified application.

If a telephone conference would be helpful in resolving any issues concerning this communication, please contact Applicants' primary attorney-of record, Gregory A. Sebald (Reg. No. 3,280), at (612) 336.4728.

Respectfully submitted,

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7. A polysaccharide sponge according to [any one of claims 1 to 5,] claim 1, wherein said sponge further comprises a cross-linking agent selected from the group consisting of the salts of calcium, copper, aluminum, magnesium, strontium, barium, tin, zinc, chromium, organic cations, poly(amino acids), poly(ethyleneimine), poly(vinylamine), poly(allylamine), and polysaccharides.

9. A polysaccharide sponge according to claim 7 [or claim 8], wherein said cross-linker is used in the form of a cross-linker solution having a concentration of cross-linker sufficient to provide a cross-linker concentration between about 0.1% to about 0.3% w/v in the final solution from which the sponge is obtained.

10. A polysaccharide sponge according to [any one of claims 1 to 9,] claim 1, wherein said sponge is prepared from a polysaccharide solution with or without the addition of a cross-linker.

14. A polysaccharide sponge according to [any one of claims 1 to 13] claim 1 for use as a matrix, substrate or scaffold for growing mammalian cells in vitro.

39. An artificial organ equivalent comprising a polysaccharide sponge according to [any one of claims 1 to 13] claim 1 and representative cells of said organ, said cells having been grown on said sponge *in vitro* to the stage wherein said cells are fully active and equivalent to the active cells of said organ, said artificial organ being suitable for transplantation or implantation into a patient in need thereof following organ damage, removal or dysfunction.